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Carnahan Will Moderate Roundtable of Women Officials in Afghanistan Government, Address National CARE Conference Today

(WASHINGTON, DC) - Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-03), chairman of a key foreign affairs subcommittee on human rights, will highlight the importance of women's rights around the world to strengthen U.S. national security, economic development and global stability at two events this afternoon.

"The bottom line is that everyone benefits when women have equal rights," said Carnahan, who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight.

"Nations are more stable, peaceful, and prosperous when women and girls have access to equal educational, political and economic opportunities. And that global stability is of the utmost importance to the United States' economic and security interests."

At 3:00 p.m., Carnahan will moderate a roundtable with Members of Congress and women Ministers from the Afghani government to discuss how the U.S. and Afghanistan can work together to empower women politically, economically and socially, and the important role of women in the Afghanistan reconstruction effort.

Last month, during a House Foreign Affairs Committee trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Carnahan and other members of the bipartisan delegation were briefed on the reconstruction process, including work being done to encourage Afghanistan's agricultural industry. Agriculture is the single most important industry in the overwhelmingly rural nation, with 80 percent of all Afghanis making their living from farming. Women make up 60 percent of the Afghan population and a substantial portion of the agricultural workforce. Additionally, intelligence experts have expressed concerns that Afghanistan's extremely high mortality rates among children and expectant mothers could help boost support for the Taliban by undermining confidence in the Afghan government.

"The sooner that the Afghani people are able to establish economic stability, the better it is for the security and economic well-being of the U.S. and the rest of the world," Carnahan said.

"Evidence shows that when women are free to earn a living and get an education, their families and communities flourish and prosper. When women and children have access to health care services, it stabilizes communities. And when women are empowered to engage in the political process, governments are more effective and responsive to their people."

Participants in the roundtable include Members of Congress, as well as:

- Melanne Verweir, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues
- H.E. Amena Safi Afzali, Afghan Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
- Dr. Suraya Dalil, Acting Afghan Minister of Public Health
- Abedeh Osman, Afghan Director of Human Rights and International Women's Affairs within the Ministry Of Foreign Affairs

- Humaira Namati, Deputy Chief of Staff to Afghan President Hamid Karzai

Later in the afternoon, Carnahan will address several hundred people attending the CARE National Conference. CARE is a leading humanitarian organization that places special emphasis on programs targeting poor women in its efforts to fight global poverty.

"Women's rights are human rights," said Carnahan. "The world simply cannot make lasting progress in the 21st century if half of the population is left behind. By working to make sure that women and girls have access to education, health care and economic opportunities, we make an investment in our own economic and national security."

According to CARE, an estimated 1 billion people worldwide live on less than \$1 per day and suffer from extreme hunger. Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by this extreme poverty, making up 70% of those 1 billion people. CARE works alongside women in developing nations, empowering them with the proper resources that can help move families and communities out of poverty.

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